



A STUDY ON THE CAREER ASPIRATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

Youths of the present generation often find themselves confused about choose a career, which is closely related to employment opportunities, money earnings and societal status. Career aspirations play a crucial role in directing individuals to choose a career and pursue necessary education and training accordingly. The primary focus of this study to explore the level of career aspiration of undergraduate students and it also seeks to investigate the difference in career aspiration among undergraduate students on gender, residential background (Domicile), and academic discipline basis. The Descriptive Survey Method was used by the researchers, the sample consists of 150 undergraduate students. The samples were randomly taken from different colleges affiliated with Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia. The primary data were collected using the Career Aspiration Scale (Arifa Sultana, 2015) and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test. The study results explored a moderate level of career aspiration among undergraduate students. The study results experienced that the undergraduate students not significantly differ in their career aspiration based on gender (t-value = 0.463), residential background (t-value = 1.974), and academic discipline (t-value = 0.850).

Keywords: Aspirations, Career Aspiration, Education, Undergraduate Students

Introduction

Today's youths are experiencing difficulty in finding employment opportunities, whereas choosing a suitable career is highly associated with job opportunities (Qonitain *et al*, 2023), career choice is being considered as one of the most important decisions that people have made during their entire life (Amit & Gati, 2013). It is often observed that obtaining a degree or certificate from an institution does not ensure individuals employability; other essential knowledge, skills and experiences are also important. Discussing that lack of imperative knowledge, skills and training are the main reasons for unemployment, and the far more technological advancements tend to minimize reliance on human resources or manpower exacerbate the situation. Hence, career choice is essential for everyone, it guides individuals in their educational preferences, develops skills and helps in acquiring indispensable knowledge. It is recognised as key driver in the career choice process (Creed, 2010). Somehow the career choice directs one's professional life. Studies have shown that choosing a career with great interest, strong feelings, and motivation leading a successful profession and satisfaction. The term 'Career Aspirations' simply denotes one's professional desires, goals, ambitions, or inclinations. In addition, it is the goals or ambitions of individuals that they set for their career paths, that they want to see themselves in later occupational life. Career aspirations refer to a desired occupation, profession or position that an individual aim to pursue and achieve professionally. Saini & Kaur (2022) states career choice is crucial for everyone's life, its significance is far-reaching in terms of lifestyle, social status, money earnings, job security and job stratification, etc. Qonitain *et al* (2023) highlighted choosing a career path and being educate accordingly is important for one's life and decisions about career choice has started to form at early developmental stages of life. Although, a schema formation of career decisions has been started during the initial phases of human development (Creed, 2010; Sawitri & Dewi, 2023). Identification of inner talent and awareness of individual self in early schooling years has influenced career choice or preferences in later life. Despite this, career aspirations are formed by one's personal interests, values, abilities, skills and motivation. Additionally, career aspirations can be shaped by parental expectations for their children and influence, and societal influence too (Amit & Gati, 2013). Zewude & Habtegiorgis (2022) noted that participation in cultural programs within societies, clubs, and local, regional and national level plays an essential role in uncovering natural talent and self-awareness, while Robertson (2015) mentioned that the individuals health can be affecting their career aspiration, career opportunities,

finding a job, and job security. Every year millions of undergraduate students are passing out from different colleges and universities and looking for job opportunities. The majority of the students are willing to get paid jobs and the rest of them want to be self-employed. Even though finding non-government jobs becomes more difficult for them and for government jobs the situation is scary. In this regard, different studies highlighted that career aspirations are linked with career constructs and influence school performance, self-efficacy, career decisions, and maturity careers, and vice versa. Indeed Saini & Kaur (2022) demonstrated low career aspiration led to career confusion and makes difficulty in career decisions. Mwara (2020) experienced high career aspiration among secondary school students and its positive relation with their academic performance. High career aspiration is often linked with good study behaviours (Arhin 2018), indicating students career aspirations guide themselves to build consistent study habits, keeping them motivated and help in active engagement in learning. Additionally, career aspirations direct students in enrolment of relevant courses, choosing course content, and obtaining knowledge and experience accordingly. While Alam & Zoohar (2020) demonstrate that the career aspirations of undergraduate students and the courses they pursued are not linked, which reflect that the courses students are pursuing have not influenced by their career preferences. Similarly, Madurangi (2019) observed graduate students were not engaged with the careers that they had pursued in the graduation program, they were engaged with different other careers and jobs. These findings exhibit the courses or programs undergraduate enrolled themselves somehow non-identical with their career aspirations. Given the complexities of deciding on career choices and the noticeable incongruity between career aspirations and educational choices, this study aims to investigate the career aspiration of undergraduate students. To design educational strategies for undergraduate students that calibrate their career aspirations and prepare them for emerging job opportunities, it is necessary to comprehend these dynamics.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the level of Career Aspiration of Undergraduate Students.
2. To find out the difference between Male and Female students in terms of their Career Aspiration.
3. To find out the difference between Rural and Urban students in terms of their Career Aspiration.
4. To find out the difference between Arts and Science students in terms of their Career Aspiration.

Research Question

1. What is the level of career aspiration of undergraduate students?

Hypotheses of the Study

H01: There is no significant difference between Female and Male students in terms of their Career Aspiration.

H02: There is no significant difference between Rural and Urban students in terms of their Career Aspiration.

H03: There is no significant difference between Arts and Science students in terms of their Career Aspiration

Methodology: The Descriptive Survey Method was employed by the researchers. A sample of 150 Undergraduate Students were taken from different colleges under Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, while the samples were chosen randomly, and the primary data was collected accordingly. The Career Aspiration Scale (Constructed and Developed by Arifa Sultana, 2015) was adopted as a research tool for data collection. The secondary data were collected from different journal articles, books, and, news articles. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test.

Results:

Table 1: Shows the Number, Mean, and S.D of the total Students

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Score	150	102.77	12.294
Valid N (listwise)	150		

The level of career aspiration was classified into three categories: high, moderate, and low based on obtained scores of the total sample. The undergraduate students who were scoring above $M + \sigma$ categorized as a high level of career aspiration, those scoring between $M + \sigma$ and $M - \sigma$ and below $M - \sigma$ categorized as moderate and low career aspiration level respectively. Table 2 presents the distribution of students in each category, in terms of their scores, frequency, and percentages.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents' Level of Career Aspiration based on scores

Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Level of Career Aspiration
Above 115.064	32	21.3%	High
Between 115.064 -90.476	85	56.7%	Moderate
Below 90.476	33	22%	Low
Total	150	100%	

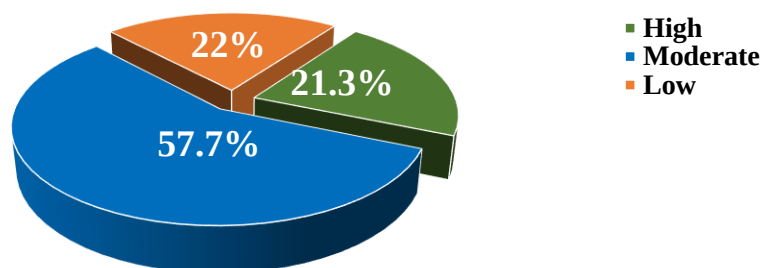


Figure 1. Distributions of Respondents' Career Aspirations Level

Figure. 1 outline that the majority of the undergraduate students registered a moderate level of career aspiration (56.7%) followed by a low career aspiration level (22%). A minority of 21.3% of the students reported a high level of career aspiration. This finding indicates most of the undergraduate students having moderate level of career aspiration and this could be led them to consistent in their educational performances.

Table 3: Comparison of Career Aspiration Across Gender, Residential Background, and Academic Discipline

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Differences	Df	t-value	Sig (2tailed)	Remark
Female	97	205.52	21.144	1.666	148	.463	.644	(Not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance) * Retained
Male	53	203.85	20.954					
Rural	100	207.30	21.429	7.120	148	1.974	.050	(Not significant at 0.05 level of significance) * Retained
Urban	50	200.18	19.533					
Arts	119	205.67	22.428	3.608	148	.850	.397	(Not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance) * Retained
Science	31	202.06	14.339					

In Table No 3, Row 1 demonstrates no significant difference in career aspiration between Male and Female undergraduate students. The calculated t-value (.463) is less than the critical t-value, and the p-value (.644) is above the significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between Male and Female undergraduate students in terms of their Career Aspiration, is retained. The findings presented in Table No 3, Row 2 presents no significant difference between Rural and Urban undergraduate students in their Career Aspiration. The calculated t-value (1.974) is lower than the critical t-value, and the p-value (.050) is equal to the significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained, it could be concluded that there is no significant difference between Rural and Urban undergraduate students in their career aspiration. In Table No 3, Row 3 show no significant difference in career aspiration of Arts and Science undergraduate students. The calculated t-value (.850) is lower than the critical t-value, and the p-value (.397) is above the significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the two groups in their career aspiration, is retained.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this present study undergraduates reported a moderate career aspiration level, similar findings were reported in the study of Bindu and Padmanabhan (2016), observed a moderate career aspiration level among students. However, undergraduate students exhibit high career aspiration level by studies of Mwaura (2020), Sambrani & Sidram (2022), Vinothkumar & Perumal (2022), which differs from the findings of this study. This suggests that a moderate level of career aspiration might

reflect a balanced outlook, continuity in student's motivation for sustained performance and to ensure high academic results in their academic endeavours. No statistically significant differences in career aspirations between male and female students echoes the findings of Bhandari (2014), Alam & Zahoor (2021), and Kaur & Grewal (2023), who also not found any significant gender-based differences in career aspirations. While, an association between gender and career aspiration was observed by Kumar (2016), indicating that the relationship may change depending on the context. Rural and Urban undergraduate students did not differ in their career aspirations also reported in this study, which incongruent with the findings of Bhandari (2014), indicates a statistically significant difference in career aspiration between Rural and Urban students, and urban students exhibits higher career aspiration compared to their counterpart Rural students. Despite this, (Kumar, 2016) observed a significant relationship between domicile (Rural and urban) and career aspiration. In addition, no significant differences were noted between Arts and Science students, congruent to Bhandari's (2014) observations but contradicts Vinothkumar & Perumal (2022), who reported differences in career aspiration based on academic discipline. These findings imply that career aspirations are not generally influenced by gender, residential background, and academic discipline, and may depend on other different contextual factors.

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